

Royal College of Science—Prof. W. A. Tilden.
Meteorological Council—Admiral Sir W. Wharton.
Christian Evidence Society—The Rev. C. Lloyd Engstrom.
Corporation of Cambridge—The Mayor (Councillor P. H. Young), the Ex-Mayor (Ald. G. Kett).

After the service, the procession left the church in the following order:—The officiating clergy, the body, the fellows of the college, the relatives, honorary fellows and former fellows of the College, the Vice-Chancellor and other representatives of the University, together with representatives of learned societies, members of the Senate, bachelors of arts, scholars, other members of the College, and all those desiring to attend the service at the Mill Road Cemetery, where the interment took place.

EXPLORATIONS IN ICELAND¹

DURING the nineteenth century, and up to the present time, a considerable number of books and magazine articles were published in England and America giving an account of travels in Iceland. The greater part of these writings contain merely personal details, interesting only to the narrator himself and his nearest relations; some remind us pleasantly of Mark Twain's "Innocents Abroad"; others are well written and possess some literary value, though these also are very liable to contain errors.

Some of these travels have a quasi-scientific tendency, but do not contain anything new, and very few contain anything of real scientific importance. We may, perhaps, say that the oldest books describing

more, and generally study very little; the traveller passes over half the world without any serious preparation beforehand, and, when he returns home, he considers it to be his duty to enlighten the reading public with a thick book containing observations and discoveries about matters which hundreds of other travellers have described much better before him. Fortunately, however, there

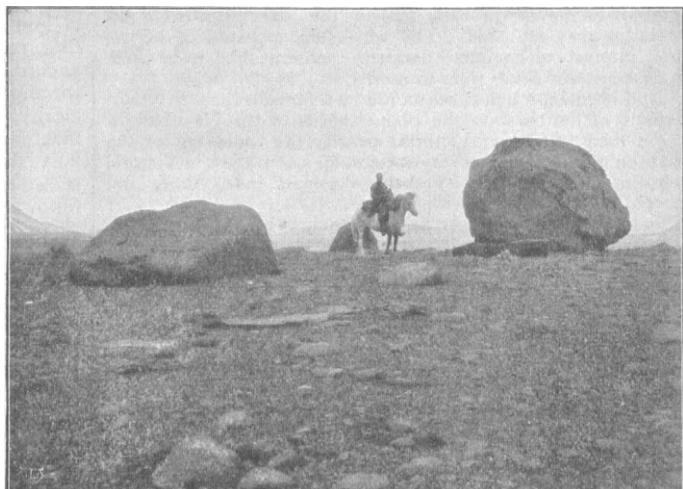


FIG. 2.—Immense Erratics. (From Bisiker's "Across Iceland.")

are some honourable exceptions, and we are always delighted to welcome a book that really contains anything new. Mr. W. Bisiker's book belongs to this class. The author made it his object to explore and map out the district of Kjalvegur in Central Iceland, one of the most beautiful parts of the interior, which had never been surveyed in detail, and Mr. Bisiker's admirable map of the district is, therefore, of permanent geographical importance. The book also contains numerous photographs, which give a very good idea of the various geological and physico-geographical characteristics, and there are some good illustrations of the mode of travelling in Iceland. In addition, Mr. Hill has given some interesting notices of the distribution of plants in Kjalvegur, with a list of the plants which were found, among which is *Ophioglossum vulgatum*, which had not previously been found in Iceland.

TH. THORODDSEN.

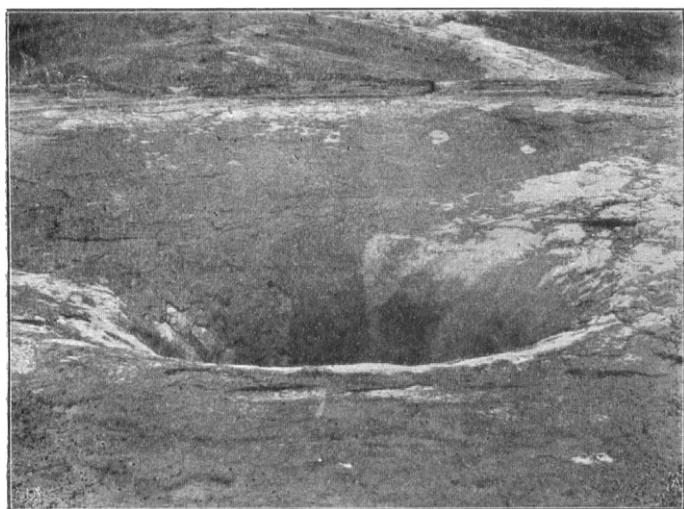


FIG. 1.—The Funnel or Crater of Geysir. (From Bisiker's "Across Iceland.")

travels in Iceland are also the best, and that the books of Hooker (1809), Mackenzie (1810) and Henderson (1814-15) are far superior to nearly all later works. At that period, the traveller had time to study the literature and the people, and to investigate for himself the language of the country and the history and customs of the inhabitants. At the present day, people travel much

¹ "Across Iceland." By W. Bisiker, F.R.G.S. With an Appendix by A. W. Hill, M.A., on the Plants Collected. Pp. xii + 236. (London: Edward Arnold, 1902.) Price 12s. 6d.

IT was announced on Saturday last that the King had been pleased to appoint a Royal Commission to inquire into the means of locomotion and transport in London. The Commission is also asked to report upon the following points:—

(a) As to the measures which they deem most effectual for the improvement of the same by the development and interconnection of railways and tramways on or below the surface, by increasing the facilities for other forms of mechanical locomotion, by better provision for the organisation and regulation of vehicular and pedestrian traffic, or otherwise;

(b) As to the desirability of establishing some authority or tribunal to which all schemes of railway or tramway construction of a local character should be referred, and the powers which it would be advisable to confer upon such a body.

The following are the Royal Commissioners:—

Sir David Miller Barbour, K.C.S.I., K.C.M.G., chairman; the Earl Cawdor, the Viscount Cobham, the Lord Ribblesdale, the Right Hon. Sir J. C. Dimsdale, Bart., K.C.V.O., Sir J. P. Dickson-Poynder, Bart., Sir R. T. Reid, G.C.M.G., K.C., Sir Francis J. S. Hopwood, K.C.B., Permanent Secretary to the Board of Trade, Sir J. Wolfe Barry, K.C.B., F.R.S., Sir G. C. Trout Bartley, K.C.B., Mr. Charles S. Murdoch, C.B., Mr. Felix Schuster and Mr. George Gibb; Mr. Lynden Livingston Macassey will act as secretary.

It will be seen that the reference to the Commission is very wide, and the Commissioners will have before them a task of no small difficulty and complexity. There can be little question but that the time was ripe for the appointment of a Commission, and it is to be hoped that the intricacy of the problem will not unduly delay the presentation of the final report, which, judging from the names of the Commissioners, may be confidently relied upon to furnish valuable suggestions for evolving order out of the present chaos.

London is said to have lagged far behind the large towns in other countries in its development of facilities for transport and locomotion. Whether this is due to our natural inertia in the application of the latest engineering developments or to the much greater difficulty of the problem in London, it is a fault which results in some advantages. Now that we are awake to the necessity of speedy and thorough reform, we are able to look round at what has been done elsewhere and select the methods which seem most suited to our special requirements. In this respect, the Royal Commissioners will have an abundance of material from which to choose. On the one hand they will have to consider the various methods of constructing tramways and railways, and on the other the means for relieving the congestion of the ordinary horse and motor traffic. Although it is probably recognised by all that electric traction has proved itself to be far the most suitable for urban and suburban tramways and railways, people are by no means in such close agreement as to the best methods of construction. The success and popularity of the Central London Railway have led many to suppose that the solution of London's traffic problem lies in the indefinite multiplication of "tubes." The experiences of the past Parliamentary session have, however, clearly shown that we cannot look forward to any such simple solution to be provided by private enterprise alone, and the fiasco which then occurred has emphasised the desirability of holding an authoritative inquiry to suggest some definite line of development even if only in reference to this point. The deep-level railway, however, possesses many obvious drawbacks, such, for example, as its lack of ventilation and its unsuitability for coping with short-distance traffic. Some of these might be avoided by the adoption of the shallow-subway railway or tramway, so strongly advocated by the London County Council, and this, at any rate in some localities, would go far towards satisfying the needs of the public. In addition to these, there is the overhead railway to be considered, and also the possibility of developing and extending the use of surface tramways.

The Royal Commission will have to consider, not only the relative merits of these different types of railways, but also the very important question of intercommunication. It is in this respect that progress by undirected private enterprise is least satisfactory, for it may be said that the most essential point is the provision of a number of independent units, each satisfying the wants of the district it particularly supplies, but yet forming a part of a definite and connected whole. Such vexed questions as what type of junction is best, which is the best method of charging, and many others of minor importance, all have to be considered in relation to this point. The appointment of a central authority with power to deal with questions such as these as they arise in the future, as is suggested in the second paragraph of the reference, cannot fail to

have a beneficial influence on the orderly and systematic development of traction facilities in London. The problem is, of course, considerably complicated by the existence of several railways already, with which any new scheme will have to fit in; but if this makes it impossible to carry out an ideal arrangement, as could be done if we were starting with a clean slate, it need not prevent the Commissioners from framing a satisfactory scheme.

The Commissioners are asked to report on the means of locomotion generally, and the railway and tramway question is only a small part of the traffic problem. Even with the diversion of as much traffic as possible to suitable railways, the London streets would still be congested. Let us hope that some means will be found for so regulating the horse traffic that it will become possible to make the most of the great advantages which are afforded by mechanical traction—whether by the private or public motor-car—and by the bicycle. The bicycle has already become, and motor-cars are rapidly becoming, a necessity, but the state of the London streets at present does not allow the capabilities of either to be used to the best advantage, and to this may be largely ascribed a part of our backwardness in the development of the engineering and technical side of the subject. Whether or not it may be found feasible to reserve certain roads or parts of roads for motor traffic, as suggested by the Prime Minister a short time ago, must remain at present an open question. Provision of some sort will have to be made, either in this way or by altering the methods of regulating traffic, to enable the mechanically propelled vehicle to properly perform its share in expediting London transport.

The whole question of London traffic is bound up with many side issues of the utmost importance to the community. Of these may be mentioned the housing question, the solution of which is certainly only to be obtained concurrently with the solution of the transport question. The breaking up of the streets for gas, water, electric light, telegraph, telephone and the many other public services also bears very directly on the locomotion question; it is, indeed, one of the County Council's chief recommendations for their shallow-subway tramways that they will afford also a means of getting over this difficulty. The decentralisation of factories and workshops also depends largely on facilities of transport and locomotion. These and many other kindred problems will doubtless receive the consideration of the Commissioners. Lastly, the very important questions of cost and finance will have to be dealt with, since these form the touchstone by which the merits of any scheme will have to be finally tested.

Although we have only been able to touch on a few of the subjects with which the Commissioners will have to deal, enough has been said to show that they have before them no light task, and no one will feel surprised if it occupies them for a long period. The extreme urgency of the question makes it desirable that their report shall be forthcoming with the least possible delay, and still more that, when it has been presented, it should be immediately given practical application by the necessary legislation. There is no fear that on the scientific side of the subject any difficulties need be anticipated. It may be safely said that our engineers are capable of coping with the practical difficulties of any scheme that may be recommended. The difficulty lies, not in providing convenient means of transit—these, and many of them, are ready to hand—but in providing the facilities for their utilisation. Short of establishing a service of aerial cars, there is probably nothing in the way of "means of locomotion and transport" which modern engineering cannot provide, and this being the case, it is to be hoped that we may look forward to London being in a few years the first, instead of the last, of the large cities in its transit facilities.

MAURICE SOLOMON.